

SUBJECT: Delivering Excellence in Children's Services – Placement & Support Team (PAST)

Directorate: Social Care & Health

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 6th December 2017

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: County Wide

1. PURPOSE

- To provide details of a proposed re-alignment of Monmouthshire Children's Services delivery model specifically in regards to the Placement and Support Team (PAST).
- To highlight progress against the targets identified within the initial business case previously endorsed by Cabinet including an outline of next steps.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That Cabinet considers and approves:

- The proposed deletion of 1 assessing social worker posts from the establishment within the PAST.
- The transfer of resource released from this post into the creation of a social worker post within the Family Support and Protection Team or Early Help Duty and Assessment Team (as per recommendation 2.3.2 of the Workforce report).
- That the staffing budget for 1 further assessing social worker post remains flexible either to retain as a part-time or full-time employee or to use the equivalent funds into a spot-purchasing budget to procure independent assessments as and when required. This will depend on the outcomes of recent recruitment campaigns, as well as the current staff movements within the service.

- To progress with reviewing 3 other posts also created within the initial business case i) Psychologist ii) Special Guardianship Worker and iii) Placements and Contracts Officer Post.
- To transfer the Contact Team from the line management of the PAST to the Service Manager Early Help and Assessment as part of the realignment of Family Support and Edge of Care services.

2.2 Cabinet members are requested to consider these proposals in the context of:

- The National Fostering Framework which sets out the direction for more regional approaches to fostering services across Wales (see background papers).
- The increasing demands and pressures across Monmouthshire Children's Services as set out within the Workforce report. There continues to be an upward trend in the numbers of children Looked After Children, children on the Child Protection Register and Children subject to court proceedings, with corresponding budgetary pressure.
- The two parallel papers presented regarding Family Support and Workforce.

3. Key Issues

3.1 In 2014 council approved a business case to include as follows:

- To employ 2 full-time Social Workers with the intention of recruiting more Monmouthshire Foster Carers
- To employ a part time psychologist to assist with the recruitment and retention of foster carers and promote placement stability
- To create a Placements and Contracts Officer post to assist with finding and maintaining placements for children in foster care
- To create a Special Guardianship Order worker to support / increase Special Guardianship Orders within the authority.

3.2 The PAST Project Board was established in early 2017 to work within the overall Delivering Excellence Programme for Children's Services and specifically to:

- Review progress against targets in the business case
- Review the additional posts that had been created within the business case
- Develop an improvement plan
- To consider different service delivery options.

3.3 The Project Board carried out a range of activities in accordance with its aims including:

- Benchmarking against other Local Authorities and regional partners
- Development of team dashboards and performance indicators for the PAST
- Gaining feedback from foster carers
- Caseload analyses and productivity over the last 5 years
- Gaining feedback from colleagues in the wider Children's Services arena

3.4 Outcomes from the review

- The original business case assumed that increasing staff would, amongst other targets, increase foster carer recruitment and retention and allow more placements to be made with in-house foster carers. However, this was found not to be the case.
- The review data informed us that in comparison to other Local Authority fostering teams our caseloads and productivity remained low.
- That kinship carers were often required within tight timescales of court work, which could make it difficult to manage peaks & troughs. This was found to create delays within the completion of generic fostering assessments.
- The review concluded that further work around systems and processes for the PAST could help improve efficiency.
- In summary, the objectives within the 2014 business case were not fully on target to be met and were therefore not having the required impact on the service. Consequently, the low number of Monmouthshire Foster Carers continues to make us over-reliant on independent fostering agency carers which creates additional budgetary pressure, and does not improve outcomes for our Looked After children and young people.
- The Fostering Project Board is now structured around separate workstreams (see figure 1). Targets are set around the increase in generic carers and the transfer of independent foster carers to Monmouthshire carers.

Figure 1

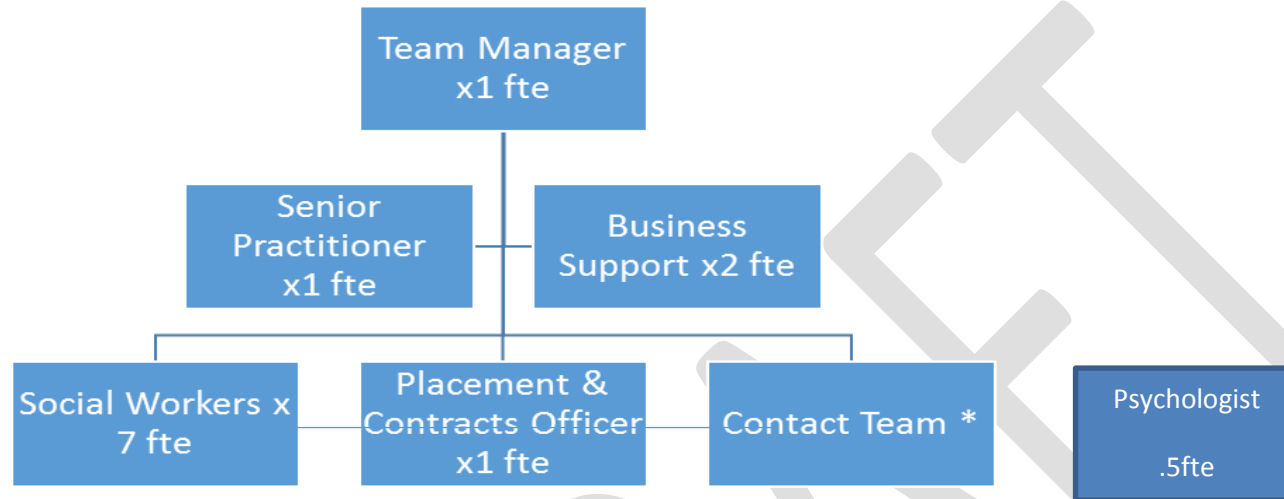


3.5 Current Proposals

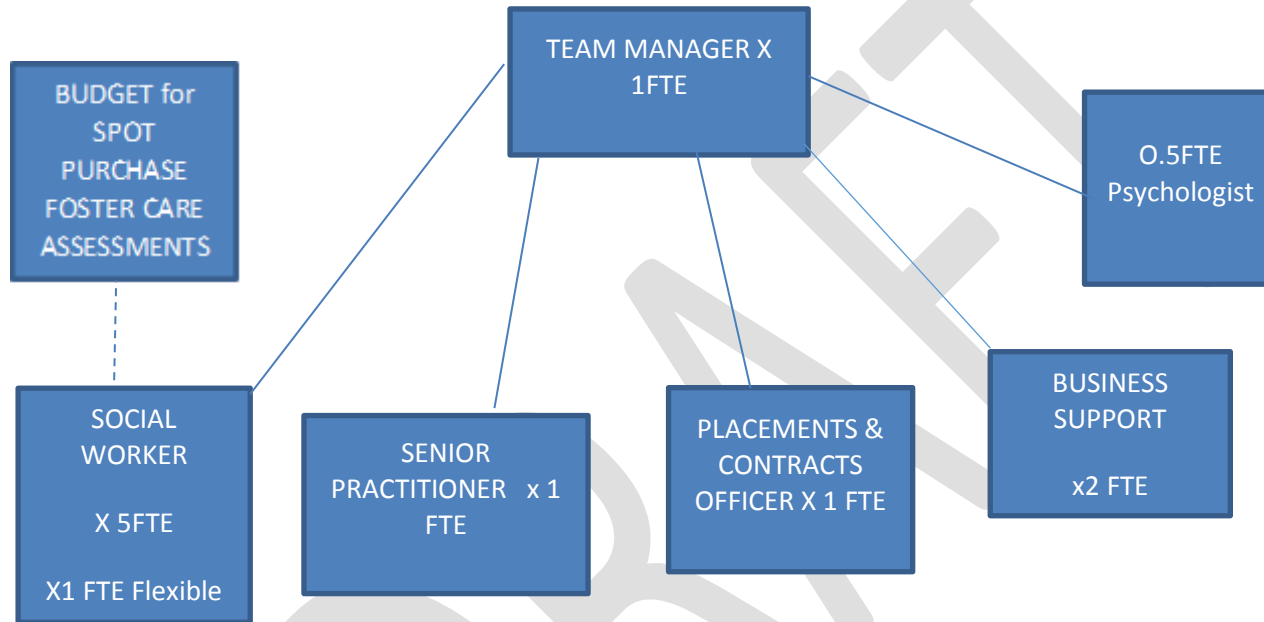
- Following the overall workforce analysis of demand versus resources, we propose to release one full-time social work resource from PAST to assist with addressing the pressures within the wider Children's Services area where demand currently exceeds resource.
- There is a cost benefit analysis argument regarding either employing social workers to complete generic assessments or procuring Independent Social Workers (ISWs) on a spot-purchase basis. A spot-purchase arrangement is advantageous in that it can be immediately responsive to demand, and allows for of a number assessments to be progressed at the same time. There are a number of independent assessors available to work for Monmouthshire and a commissioning process in place to support this.
- Independent assessors can be less useful for kinship assessments because of the very tight timescales often imposed by court, and because of the close liaison between the child's social worker and the kinship assessor that is often required in these situations. (There can be exceptions to this e.g. when a kinship assessment is required as part of on-going care planning rather than through a court order.)

- The average cost of an ISW is £2,500 to complete a generic assessment, meaning that you could commission 20 assessments per year to equate to the cost of 1 FTE social worker. However, this does not take full account of the additional tasks required of a social worker around kinship assessments, support and supervision of foster carers and support of the recruitment process.
- The PAST team is in the process of developing its use of PLANT so that accurate performance data regarding assessment activity can be obtained as we move forward with the fostering project work.
- We therefore propose to retain a 'flexible' staffing budget for 1 assessing social worker either to retain as a part-time or full-time employee or to use the equivalent funds to procure independent assessments as and when required. This will depend on the outcomes of recent recruitment campaigns, as well as the current staff movements within the service. The purpose of this retained flexibility is to help us manage peaks and troughs around demand over time and reduce delay in the completion of generic assessments.
- In line with the Family Support review we propose to move the Contact Team from the management structure of the PAST into that of the Early Help and Assessment service area. This is to achieve a managed network of support services that can be utilised in a more efficient and effective way by coming under the umbrella of one Service Manager.
- In line with the original business case (2014) we propose to continue to review the posts to ensure that they are best aligned to the overall aims of the service and specifically the Fostering Project
- If the proposals within this report are agreed by Cabinet implementation will move forward between January and April 2018.

3.6 Current Service Model within placement Team



3.7 Proposed Service Delivery Model



3.8 Summary of changes

What will change?	What will be created?
One FTE assessing social work post will be deleted and moved to Family Support and Protection Team	No post will be created as a result of this the fostering team and the post will be retained elsewhere within Children's Services establishment
One FTE assessing social work post will remain flexible in respect of the configuration of the financial resource	The financial resource will remain in the team and used flexibly to spot purchase independent assessments or retain social work capacity in order to respond to need over time.
The contact team will move across to the 'front door'.	This will align with the second phase of the family support review

4. Option appraisal

OPTIONS	BENEFITS	DIS-BENEFITS	RECOMMENDED	Cost
1. Retain status quo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No short term disruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional resource tied up in system unable to respond to pressure points The current demand doesn't justify this level of resource. 	No	No cost to PAST but cost of £49,000 to Service
2. Delete x2 FTE from PAST team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinvest resource across wider system Reinvest resource in efficient spot purchasing approach to Foster care assessments Protected employment policy potentially benefits individuals concerned and wider service area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disruption to the team Affected Individuals may not wish to apply for alternative posts within the service Potentially reduce our capacity to meet court directed timescales for kinship care assessments Potentially needing to recreate social work posts in the future Potentially negative impact on PAST capacity to provide support to current and new foster carers 	No	Release £49k Per FTE
3. Relocate one social work post only and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces team disruption Responsive to team concerns and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would still mean some uncertainty for the team, potentially creating instability 	Recommended	Release £49k per FTE

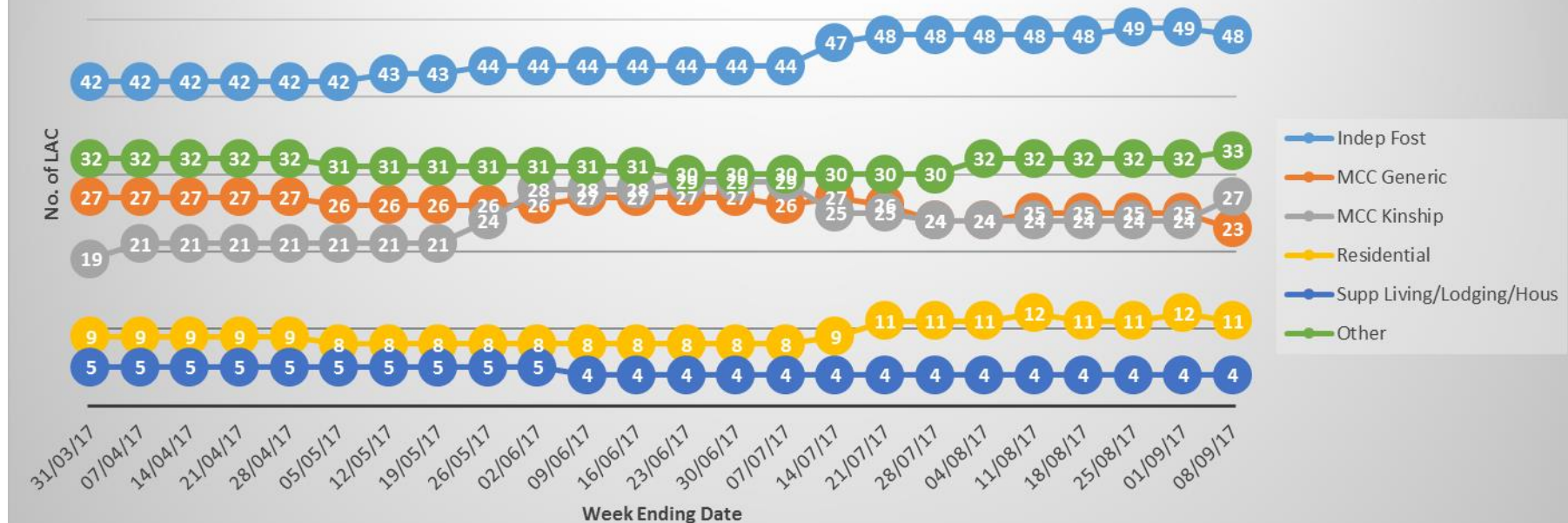
<p>retain the other within the PAST with a flexible budget</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for reinvestment of resource over wider system • This option retains maximum flexibility over time to make the best use of resources to meet the aims of the project / service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility may be hard to achieve • Further work would be required to fully understand service data and demand. 		
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5. Evaluation Criteria

- Conversion rate from inquiry to assessment target 1 assessment progressed per 10 inquiries
- Number of days from start of assessment to panel approval
- Increase in range of placements offered with Monmouthshire foster carers
- Improved retention and satisfaction of foster carers
- Increase in Monmouthshire foster carers*
- Decrease in use of Independent Fostering Agency and residential placements*
- Clearer defined role profiles within the PAST
- CYP always placed locally where in their best interests
- Increased placement stability

*Current Baseline:

Analysis of LAC Population 31/03/17 to 08/09/17



6. Risk Assessment

Risk	Uncontrolled Risk	Control	Controlled Risk
Loss of qualified social worker to whole service, and potentially exposing	Low	Any affected social worker will be able to apply for a post in the other areas of service under protected	Low

<p>the authority to redundancy costs</p>		<p>employment policy conditions</p> <p>Offer of any relevant interview support by independent manager prior to interview.</p> <p>Natural movement within team may eliminate this risk</p> <p>Employment protection policy to be implemented.</p>	
<p>The loss of a full time equivalent post from the PAST will affect performance in this area and the capacity of the team / fostering project to meet its aims.</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Current analysis of data does support this.</p> <p>Further work to streamline business systems and processes</p> <p>Implementing a project management approach to fostering project.</p>	<p>Low</p>

		The resulting structure within the re configured placement team will be reviewed on an ongoing basis as part of the wider foster care project board and to ensure any impact from the two posts is managed.	
There will be insufficient independent assessors to complete spot-purchase assessments.	Medium	Work is being undertaken to create a pool of independent assessors for Monmouthshire. Flexibility is retained with the use of the resource	Low
Commissioning and quality assurance processes for independent assessors will be time-consuming and outweigh benefits of releasing any resource to fund this.	Medium	Commissioning and quality assurance processes are in place Flexibility is retained with the use of the resource	Low

7. Resource Implications

Resources that will be released as a result of these proposals will be recirculated within the service to i) assist with the proposals regarding increasing the social work establishment and ii) be retained within the service to create increased flexibility in order to ensure best use of resources over time. Other proposals within this report are cost neutral.

8. Future Generations & Well Being Assessment (including sustainable development, equalities, safe guarding and corporate parenting requirements)

The overall aim of the re-alignment is to ensure that the Children's Services delivery model is sufficiently resourced to provide safe and effective services to children and families. Getting the optimum delivery model is central to our overall aims of delivering consistently high standards of well-being, prevention, managed social care and safeguarding within Children's Services.

The work of the fostering project aligns closely to the Local Authority's corporate parenting responsibilities around ensuring good outcomes for Looked After Children and Young People.

9. Background Papers:



0765 NFF Phase
Two Report 2016-20

10. Consultees

- Children's Services Management Group
- Directorate Management Group

- Senior Leadership Team
- Unions: Unison & GMB
- CYP Select
- PAST team
- Foster carers
- Wider CS management

The consultation feedback and responses are collated at Annexe 1

11. Report Author

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